

THE JUNGLE

Thrilling Story of Packingtown
Novel That Has Startled Nation

By Upton Sinclair

THE story of "The Jungle," Upton Sinclair's novel, which caused the government investigation into the methods employed by the Beef Trust, has its origin in an actual Packingtown romance.

A simple-minded coterie of Lithuanians arrive in Chicago seeking employment, and are conducted to Packingtown by a friend. Jurgis, a giant in strength, is betrothed to Ona, and the first chapter tells of the wedding in all its grotesqueness. After much tribulation the entire family obtains work in the stockyards—all but Ona, who, Jurgis said, should never work.

The terrible tale of the slaughter houses is told with almost revolting detail—the filth, the overworking of hands, the struggle to keep up with the pacemakers, is all vividly depicted. The little family buys a house on the installment plan, only to find they have been swindled, and Ona is forced to seek work to meet the actual living expense and the interest on the purchase contract, of which they learn too late.

Just as Ona and Jurgis pay Marija what they owe her, Jurgis turns his ankle and is laid up for months. His nature begins to change. He becomes cross and savage with pain. Starvation stares the family in the face.

Then Ona confesses, under compulsion, that in order to save the entire family from financial destruction and loss of jobs, Connor, foreman of her department in the yards, had forced her to receive attentions from him. Jurgis almost kills her. Then he rushes blindly to the yards and tries to kill Connor, sinking his teeth into him, and is dragged off by a dozen men. Jurgis is then arrested, and spends Christmas eve in prison, awaiting trial.

Later he is sentenced to thirty days in prison. Finally he is released and returns to what was once his home. Another family has it.

Jurgis traces his family to a shanty to find his wife dying. He seeks a midwife, who laughs in his face when he tells her he has only a dollar and a quarter, but she finally relents and goes with him. At the door of the shanty Marija meets and entreats him to go away until the morning. He walks the streets all night, and reaches home in the morning in time to close his wife's eyes in death. Then he takes to drink in earnest.

Jurgis is blacklisted in every packing house by Connor, but finally obtains a job with the Harvester Trust.

Out in the saloons the men could tell him all about the meaning of it. They gazed at him with pitying eyes—poor devil, he was blacklisted! What had he done? they asked—knocked down his boss? Good heavens, then he might have known! Why, he stood as much chance of getting a job in Packingtown as of being chosen mayor of Chicago. Why had he wasted his time hunting? They had him on a secret list in every office, big and little, in the place. They had his name by this time in St. Louis and New York, in Omaha and Boston, in Kansas City and St. Joseph.

He was condemned and sentenced, without trial and without appeal; he could never work for the packers again—he could not even clean cattle pens or drive a truck in any place where they controlled. He might try it if he chose, as hundreds had tried it, and found out for themselves. He would never get any more satisfaction than he had gotten just now; but he would always find when the time came that he was not needed. It would not do for him to give any other name, either—they had company "spotters" for just that purpose, and he wouldn't keep a job in Packingtown three days.

Jurgis went home, carrying these new tidings to the family council. It was a most cruel thing; here in this district was his home, such as it was, the place he was used to and the friends he knew—and now every pos-

sibility of employment in it was closed to him. There was nothing in Packingtown but packing houses; and so it was the same thing as evicting him from his home.

He and the two women spent all day and half the night discussing it. It would be convenient downtown to the children's place of work; but then Marija was on the road to recovery and had hopes of getting a job in the yards; and though she did not see her old-time lover once a month, because of the misery of their state, yet she could not make up her mind to go away and give him up forever. Then, too, Elzbieta had heard something about a chance to scrub floors in Durham's offices and was waiting every day for word. In the end it was decided that Jurgis should go downtown to strike out for himself, and they would decide after he got a job. As there was no one from whom he could borrow there and he dared not beg for fear of being arrested, it was arranged that every day he should meet one of the children and be given fifteen cents of their earnings, upon which he could keep going. Then all day he was to pace the streets with hundreds and thousands of other homeless wretches, inquiring at stores, warehouses and factories for a chance and at night he was to crawl into some doorway or underneath a truck and hide there until midnight, when he might get into one of the station houses and spread a newspaper upon the floor and lie down in the midst of a throng of "bums" and beggars, reeking with alcohol and tobacco and filthy with vermin and disease.

So for two weeks more Jurgis fought with the demon of despair. Once he got a chance to load a truck for half a day, and again he carried an old woman's valise and was given a quarter. This let him into a lodging house on several nights when he might otherwise have frozen to death; and it also gave him a chance now and then to buy a newspaper in the morning and hunt up jobs while his rivals were watching and waiting for a paper to be thrown away.

In the end Jurgis got a chance through an accidental meeting with an old-time acquaintance of his union days. He met this man on his way to work in the giant factories of the Harvester Trust; and his friend told him to come along, and he would speak a good word for him to his boss, whom he knew well. So Jurgis trudged four or five miles, and passed through a waiting throng of unemployed at the gate under the escort of his friend. His knees nearly gave way beneath him when the foreman, after looking him over and questioning him, told him that he could find an opening for him.

How much this accident meant to Jurgis he realized only by stages; for he found that the harvester works were the sort of place to which philanthropists and reformers pointed with pride. It had some thought or its employees; its workshops were big and roomy; it provided a restaurant where the workmen could buy good food at cost; it had even a reading room, and decent places where its girl hands could rest; also the work was free from many of the elements of filth and repulsiveness that prevailed at the stockyards. Day after day Jurgis discovered these things—things never expected nor dreamed of by him—until this new place came to seem a kind of a heaven to him.

It was an enormous establishment, covering a hundred and sixty acres of ground, employing five thousand people. Jurgis saw very little of it, of course—it was all specialized work, the same as at the stockyards; each one of the hundreds of parts of a nowing machine was made separately, and sometimes handled by hundreds of men. Where Jurgis worked there was a machine which cut and stamped a certain piece of steel about two square inches in size; the

pieces came tumbling out upon a tray, and all that human hands had to do was to pile them in regular rows, and change the trays at intervals. This was done by a single boy, who stood with eyes and thought concentrated upon it, and fingers flying so fast that the sounds of the bits of steel striking upon each other was like the music of an express train as one hears it in a sleeping car at night. This was "piecework," of course; and besides it was made certain that the boy did not idle, by setting the machine to match the highest possible speed of human hands. Thirty thousand of these pieces he handled every day, nine or ten millions every year—how many in a lifetime it rested with the gods to say.

Near by him men sat bending over whirling grindstones, putting the finishing touches to the steel knives of the reaper; picking them out of a basket with the right hand, pressing first one side and then the other against the stone, and finally dropping them with the left hand into another basket. One of these men told Jurgis that he had sharpened three thousand pieces of stiel a day for thirteen years. In the next room were wonderful machines that ate up long steel rods by slow stakes, cutting them off, seizing the pieces, stamping heads upon them, grinding them and polishing them, threading them and finally dropping them into a basket, all ready to bolt the harvesters together. From yet another machine came tens of thousands of steel burs to fit upon these bolts. In other places all these various parts were dipped into troughs of paint and hung up to dry, and then slid along on trolleys to a room where men streaked them with red and yellow, so that they might look cheerful in the harvest fields.

Jurgis' friend worked upstairs in the casting-rooms, and his task was to make the moulds of a certain part. He shoveled black sand into an iron receptacle and pounded it tight and set it aside to harden; then it would be taken out, and molten iron poured into it. This man, too, was paid by the mould—or rather for perfect castings, nearly half his work going for naught. You might see him, along with dozens of others, toiling like one possessed by a whole community of demons; his arms working like the driving rods of an engine; his long, black hair flying wild, his eyes starting out, the sweat rolling in rivers down his face. When he had shoveled the mould full of sand, and reached for the pounder to pound it with, it was after the manner of a canoeist running rapids and seizing a pole at sight of a submerged rock. All day long this man would toil thus, his whole being centered upon the purpose of making twenty-three instead of twenty-two and a half cents an hour; and then his product would be reckoned up by the census-taker, and jubilant captains of industry would boast of it in their banquet-halls, telling how our workers are nearly twice as efficient as those of any other country. If we are the greatest nation the sun ever shone upon, it would seem to be mainly because we have been able to goad our wage-earners to this pitch of frenzy; though there are a few other things that are great among us, including our drink-bill, which is a billion and a quarter of dollars a year, and doubling itself every decade.

There was a machine which stamped out the iron plates, and then another which, with a mighty thud, mashed them to the shape of the sitting-down portion of the American farmer. Then they were piled upon a truck, and it was Jurgis' task to wheel them to the room where the machines were "assembled." This was the child's play for him, and he got a dollar and seventy-five cents a day for it; on Saturday he paid Anilee the seventy-five cents a week he owed her for the use

of her garret, and also redeemed overcoat, which Elzbieta had pawned when he was in jail.

This last was a great blessing; man cannot go about in midwinter in Chicago with no overcoat and pay for it, and Jurgis had to walk five or six miles back and forth to his work. It so happened that of this was in one direction and in another, necessitating a change of cars; the law required that trans be given at all intersecting points, the railway corporation had got around this by arranging a prett at separate ownership. So when he wished to ride, he had to pay cents each way, or over ten per cent of his income to this power, which gotten its franchises long ago by ing up the city council, in the face popular clamor amounting almost a rebellion. Tired as he felt at night and dark and bitter cold as it was the morning, Jurgis generally chose to walk; at the hours other workers were traveling, the street car merely saw fit to put on so few cars there would be men hanging to the foot of the backs of them and doors could never be closed, and the cars were as cold as outdoor Jurgis, like many others, found it ter to spend his fare for a drink a free lunch, to give him strength to walk.

These, however, were all slight matters to a man who had escaped from Durham's fertilizer mill. Jurgis began to pick up heart again and make plans. He had lost his hope but then the awful load of the past and interest was off his shoulders, when Marija was well again he could start over and save. In a shop where he worked was a Lithuanian like himself, while the others spoke of in admiring words, because of the mighty feats he was performing. All day he sat at a machine turning bolts; and then the evening he went to the public school to study English and learn to read. In addition, because he had a family of eight children to support, his earnings were not enough, on weekdays and Sundays he served as watchman; he was required to push two buttons at opposite ends of building every five minutes, and as walk only took him two minutes, had three minutes to study between each trip. Jurgis felt jealous of the fellow; for that was the sort of thing he himself had dreamed of, two three years ago. He might do it yet, if he had a fair chance—he might attract attention and become a skill man or a boss, as some had done this place. Suppose that Marija could get a job in the big mill where they made binder twine—then they would move into this neighborhood, and would really have a chance. With hope like that, there was some use living; to find a place where you were treated like a human being—by God he would show them how he could appreciate it. He laughed to himself he thought how he would hang on to this job!

And then one afternoon, the night of his work in the place, when he went to get his overcoat he saw a group of men crowded before a placard on the door, and when he went over to ask what it was, they told him the beginning with the morrow his department of the harvester works would be closed until further notice!

CHAPTER XXI.

That was the way they did it! That was not half an hour's warning—works were closed! It had happened that way before, said the men, and would happen that way forever. They had made all the harvesting machines that the world needed, and now they had to wait till some wore out! It was nobody's fault—that was the way of it; and thousands of men and women (Continued on Page Twelve.)